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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON NEW IRAQI GOVERNMENT

#### Summary

-- The formation of the new temporary government of Iraq received extensive straightforward front-page coverage in all papers published today, June 2. A minimal number of commentaries express very cautious optimism regarding the new Iraqi government.

#### Editorial Commentary

-- "Another transition step not to be belittled"

Daily columnist Mahmoud Rimawi writes on the op-ed page of semi-official, influential Arabic daily Al-Rai (06/02): "It is not unnoticed that the majority of Iraqis view the selection of a new 'temporary' president for their country and the appointment of a temporary new government as an inevitable step in the second transition after the governing council, whose role has expired. Naturally, no Iraqi has the illusion that these decisions are immediately going to lead to the transfer of sovereignty and the end of the occupation. Yet, Iraqis know the importance of having political representatives to revive the Iraqi state.. The occupation had imposed its presence partly by relying on the status quo, but also because many Iraqis believe - and this is important to acknowledge - that the United States, despite its mistakes and sins, has contributed to delivering them from the former regime, without retaining any right to prolonging its occupation or receiving any legitimacy. Yes, ending the occupation is a precious objective, a constant strategic objective that is indisputable. However, this does not nullify the fact that on the path to achieving this objective, the Iraqis have vital needs that must not be taken for granted, such as achieving security, eliminating the dangers of domestic disputes, accomplishing national reconciliation, and restoring basic services.. A genuine challenge faces the state's temporary presidency as well as the new government in terms of fulfilling the aforementioned tasks.. Resisting the presence of the occupation is a core issue that must be fulfilled with the least of cost and the best possible of results. However, Iraqis are also required to resist tendency towards domestic struggles and sectarian divisions, as well as attempts to deprive them from reviving their state.

-- "The formula of occupation and sovereignty"

Chief editor Taher Udwan writes on the back-page of independent, mass-appeal Arabic daily Al-Arab Al-Yawm (06/02): "We fear that the Arab world and the international community will be led towards solutions for the issue of the occupation of Iraq that are similar to the solutions by which the issue of the Israeli occupation of Palestine is being addressed.. In today's Iraq, there seems to be an American determination to reproduce the same Israeli formula and implement it in Iraq by merging occupation with sovereignty. Through the appointments for the new presidency and the government, we believe that the United States is not serious about ending its occupation, but rather is seeking to create an Iraqi front that would allow the continuation of this occupation. The Iraqi issue, as is the Palestinian issue, will not find a permanent solution except by going back to the Security Council to issue international decisions that explicitly state the end of the occupation, that put a timeline for the withdrawal of the occupation troops, and that give the Iraqi people the right to self-determination, without maneuvers or tricks or international decisions cooked under American pressure.. The new appointments in Baghdad were made by the governing council and the coalition authority and cannot be attributed to the Iraqi people, even if the production was done with

Brahimi's touch."

-- "A conclusive step towards a new dawn for Iraq"  
Daily columnist Jamil Nimri writes on the back-page of independent, mass-appeal Arabic daily Al-Arab Al-Yawm (06/02): "A new dawn is about to break for Iraq if the new government succeeds. The alternative is destruction. The current path was not chosen by the occupation. Prior to the invasion of Iraq, the choice was to appoint a military governor for at least two years. The occupation then took one step back when a civilian governor was appointed, followed by two steps back when the governing council was appointed without real authority. With the escalation of the resistance, the search started for a different political path through the United Nations, and the final nail in the occupation's coffin was dug in when the scandal of the tortures broke out.. The new government has more expanded and more in-depth representation than the governing council. We hear unconvincing criticisms of the new government, such as that it is elected by the governing council that is itself appointed by the occupation, and that it is not independent.. Let us be frank here: has there been in Iraq, in the past thirty years, a government that included more expanded political and social trends than this one? As for the criticism that this government was formed under the occupation, we say it a temporary situation, because the occupation is leaving whatever happens, but an Iraq without such a government and without elections is an Iraq that is prisoner to chaos and destruction.. The occupation is no longer acceptable as unanimously expressed by the Iraqis. These recent developments would not have happened had not the Americans felt that they were hated and despised and that no one wants them.. Whoever wishes this government to fail does not care for the Iraqi people, who have already paid dearly and horrifically, but is rather wishing for more deterioration and the continuance of the occupation."

-- "Al Yawar as president"

Daily columnist Basem Sakijha writes on the op-ed page of center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (06/02): "After the collapse of the declared reason for the war on Iraq, in terms of the weapons of mass destruction weapons that did not show up, the liberation of the Iraqi people that was proven wrong after what happened in the jails, and the Iraqis' acceptance of the occupation that was also proven wrong by the continuing resistance, the issue of formulating the political future of Iraq comes along, proving that the occupation is not concerned with achieving democracy. Tribalism cannot exist with democracy, and hence what is happening now is a step backward, even from the old regime's status quo, and an entrenchment of the status quo of the Iraqi society."

-- "A new leadership formation and an old Iraqi agenda"

Daily columnist Urayb Rintawi writes on the op-ed page of center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (06/02): "As Iraq embarks on a new age after the formation of the new government and presidency, the tasks and challenges remain the same.. There is some optimism in what is going on. The Iraqi parties and personalities represented in the governing council have clearly indicated their desire to avoid American dictates and to impose their own choices.. If this government manages to take genuine steps towards restoring security and stability and towards establishing state and civil institutions, then the hour of the departure of the occupation will be sooner than many had anticipated."

-- "An auction for the presidency of Iraq!"

Daily columnist Bater Wardam writes on the op-ed page of center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (06/02): "It is a shame that the presidency of a great and noble Arab republic like Iraq's has turned into a silly charade closely resembling an auction or a bidding event.. After coups and assassinations that have marked the declarations of Arab leaders over the past decades, the United States has brought us into a new form of technology for selecting Arab leaders, namely the auction.. There is going to be a president for Iraq, whose legitimacy is not different from the legitimacy acquired by anyone who came on the top of a tank. But the Iraqi people are not going to hail the new leader, for the statue has fallen, but many smaller statues are arising, and each of these statues wants to gulp down everything around him. The Iraqi

people, who have suffered Saddam's atrocities, will not receive the new president except with sarcasm against this farce that has offended the history and greatness of Iraq."

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